

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 624
By: Harris, Cody
Public Health
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Oklahoma Legislature recently passed legislation in response to a situation where an Oklahoma City fire fighter was disciplined for his decision to drive a young burn victim to the hospital in his fire truck after waiting for an ambulance to arrive. Changes are also needed to Texas law to allow for situations like this, as there are currently limitations on who may provide emergency medical services (EMS) and transport a patient in a vehicle. H.B. 624 seeks to ensure sick or injured patients are able to get medical treatment as quickly as possible by authorizing fire fighters to transport patients to a health care facility in certain emergency situations in a non-EMS vehicle.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 624 amends the Health and Safety Code to authorize a fire fighter, which includes both individuals employed as fire protection personnel and those who are certified volunteer fire fighters, regardless of whether they are licensed as an emergency medical services (EMS) provider, to transport a sick or injured patient to a health care facility in a vehicle other than an EMS vehicle if the following conditions are satisfied:

- the appropriate EMS provider is notified of the patient's clinical condition and is unable to provide services imminently at the patient's location; and
- the medical treatment and transport protocols for the patient's apparent clinical condition authorize transport of the patient in a vehicle other than an EMS vehicle.

H.B. 624 requires each EMS and trauma care system to do the following not later than January 1, 2024:

- develop the medical treatment and transport protocols necessary to implement the bill's provisions for the area the system covers; and
- provide notice of the protocols to the EMS providers and fire fighters in that area.

The bill's provisions apply only to transportation provided on or after that date.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2023.